

TOWN COUNCIL MEETING 2/23

I and the Committee truly appreciate the council's suggestions and support for this project. As I've noted here in the past, and as is noted in the packet at page 133, we have taken the council's suggestions and reworked the site placement and site prep costs to eliminate the need to use UConn land and bring down the site work cost.

It has always been, and continues to be, our plan to raise as much money as is humanly possible on our own to make this playground happen. I suspect that you, as town councilors, feel like everyone has a hand in your pocket, but please be aware that the playground committee is not coming to you on a whim. We have devoted hours upon hours to this task: baking cupcakes, routing tiles, drafting proposals, talking to parents, gluing together invitations, hiding easter eggs, and putting up flyers. There is a fundraising concert at the home of a supporter scheduled for early March, and the annual egg hunt and 5K road race are in the works. We have also started an initiative to raise funds from local businesses in a strategic manner. Once we have construction documents, we can ask local contractors for in-kind contributions that will decrease the amount that we need to complete the project. If and when we are awarded some town funds, we do not plan to sit back and stop our efforts to raise money.

*add stance*

This project has <sup>enormous</sup> support in the community, which is the reason we've been able to raise as much money as we have. We had more than 400 individual donors as of January- and that number has risen in the meantime. Our email list of people who have signed up to hear more about the project and help out <sup>total</sup> numbers more than 400. We have sold 319 fence pickets with the names of playground supporters and their loved ones. We <sup>have sold about 150</sup> sold ~~have~~ tiles, painted with the little hands and feet of children who will be able to enjoy this community resource.

I am aware that the committee has said in the past that we would not ask for town money for the playground. I must say, I wish I weren't here tonight on this business. However, our major funder has set a deadline for the use of her foundation's money, limiting the time we have to raise funds. Further, we may

*Submitted by Margaret Ferron 2/23/15*

have underestimated the cost of the site preparation. We are, of course, volunteers; and none of us has professional expertise in estimating the costs to prepare a site for a playground. As I've said in the past, we are parents, teachers, business owners and taxpayers who have been working hard to build a playground that all of Mansfield's children can enjoy. I'm an attorney, but don't hold that against the committee.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Arthur A. Smith  
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Mansfield, CT 06250

Mansfield Town Council

February 23, 2015

Dear Town Council Members:

I was in attendance at the Special Finance Committee Meeting held last Wednesday, February 18, 2015, at 6:00 pm at these Council Chambers and left with a number of questions and concerns about information provided there:

(1) For several months I have been asking for a copy of a Best Value form if one existed to follow the paper trail of how those vendors are documented. No mention has ever been made of the existence of such a form. That form has now been identified as part of the policies reviewed in the Ziplow -BlumShapiro-Financial & Operational Controls Review-Project Status Update. Why wasn't that document, if in existence earlier, provided to the public? What is the date of that policy document? Why doesn't that form have near the signature sign-off, a date requirement?

(2) Was the Project Update mentioned above, a proposed draft? Mr. Ziplow would not stand by his findings in numerous occasions, when and why did he feel after its submission that he should retract statements made?

(3) Is a Fraud tip-line, as recommended in his Status Update, common practice in other municipalities? What identified variables are at play here that makes it a prudent practice?

(4) Again in 2/10/15 town Council packet, the BlumShapiro accounting audit notes that the "town" reclassified a sizable value of construction in process that had been capitalized in prior years, what does this mean? This reclassification related to Storrs Center project costs that did not end up creating assets owned by the Town of Mansfield, can the town capitalize the costs of private ventures?; while not capitalizable costs of the Town, these costs were incurred for the overall reconstruction and redevelopment of Storrs Center, how much town money was involved here?

[Capitalization is defined as "an **accounting** method used to delay the recognition of expenses by recording the expense as long-term assets.] when was this practice approved by the Town Council?; and finally when did our Town Manager become aware of this practice and did he give his approval to it? This amounted to a 7 Million dollar mistake according to Mr. Ziplow, who is accountable for this mistake?

(5) On a similar note, when did the Town Council ever approve the Town Manager's decision to assume the operating costs of the pumping stations near the Post Office? Are controls preventing that independence, administrative expenditure, now in place?

